



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
 Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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NOTES BY THE WAY.

BY M. L. HODGSON, of the House of Education.

To our Old Students.

It may not be amiss, after reading the excellent papers on Natural History done by the little children in the *Parents' Review School*, to say a few words on the subject.

How to make it interesting.

What to look for, and how to look.

In the cold, bleak month of March all Nature is stirring. A change has come over the colouring of woods and fields. The buds that we looked at so carefully during February are swelling—the black buds of the ash, the pointed, elegant ones of the beech; the knotted buds on the oak, and the rounded ones on hazels, birches, and elms. Willows are showing their beautiful catkins of green or yellow. Hazels are in full blossom, and many other trees and shrubs are showing their various forms of flowering. It is an excellent exercise, both for eye and hand, to copy, be it ever so roughly, either in pencil or paint, the twigs and catkins of trees. Children soon learn to do it well, and to keep their note-books nicely illustrated with little drawings. A short time given to note-books once a week will not seldom result in a well-stored book of facts observed and noted by children for themselves.

Along the hedgerows many flowers are to be found now; in some places the adoxa and golden saxifrage, the red nettle, some of the speedwells, violets, mercury, and a host of others. It is very interesting to go for a walk with the avowed intention of seeing how many plants can be found out in flower, to write the list in the note-book, and to compare the lists made year by year, or month by month. This is not easy to do when the summer months come on, but as work for spring-time it is a delightful exercise.

Among the hedgerows and fields may be found many empty snail-shells of different kinds.

Under the beech-trees can be found snail-shells so exactly like the beech-buds themselves as often to be taken for them. Also the pretty grey-blue shell, with its little door fitting closely into the opening. Some places are remarkably rich in snails, and a very nice collection can be made of the empty shells found in the hedges. They may either be glued to cards, or kept in small cardboard boxes; do not on any account keep them mixed higgledy-piggledy in one box, as not only does the beauty of the shells get spoiled, but no use can be made of such a collection.

Children delight in having something to search for, and a whole series of afternoons may easily be occupied in this one search. That other things will be found *en route* hardly needs to be said.

The collecting and keeping fossils, &c., needs much discrimination, as everything that is found is thought by beginners to be worth keeping, which often results in an untidy, dusty heap of unsightly stones. It is often difficult to exercise one's own feeling on the matter, as the pleading voices say: "It is such a beauty, may I not keep it?" Grubbing in a quarry is most delightful work, and the search is often rewarded with the discovery of perfect fossils, so that one never need be content with imperfect specimens.

The birds during March are in a state of the greatest activity; on all sides one sees them, chattering, scolding, fighting, and showing every sign of mental and bodily excitement. The search for birds'-nests is a subject that needs a few words. Our students must themselves set about it with great care, and we hope will also teach others to do the same. A robbed or deserted nest is a very sad sight, but it is alas! only too common.

Birds are so timid, that they will often leave nest and eggs, if so much as a finger is placed on either. Look for nests by all means, but do not worry and tease the owners by paying constant visits to their homes.

A little care and thought for them is always generously repaid by their sweet confidence and increased familiarity. The collection of birds' eggs should not be encouraged amongst ordinary children, as they are not, as a rule, able to exercise much self-restraint in the matter, and the result is often most disastrous to the poor birds.

So many beautiful little books are now to be had on this

subject, that it is unnecessary to enumerate the birds that may now be seen.

Boys are exceedingly quick in learning all about them, easily telling the note, flight, or plumage of those they find in the neighbourhood of their homes.

This month our students will carefully notice and record any birds or nests, plants, shells or insects they can discover in their walks at Ambleside.

It is hardly possible to take up a magazine without finding much useful information on Natural History, which might easily be read and stored up for future use; and we hope those of our students who are at work in various parts of the country, will bear this in mind.

Natural History is a subject of vast interest, and one which grows upon one rapidly, when once it is taken up.

Any of the old students who would like to join the House of Education Naturalist Society, may send in their names to the Secretary.

BOOKS.

"En hoexkens ende boexkens."

Clues to Holy Writ, a scheme for studying the whole Bible in its historical order in three years, by Mary L. G. Petrie, B.A. (3s. 6d., Hodder & Stoughton).—For the last ten years, a most admirable work has been carried on without any flourish of trumpets by Miss Petrie. She originated the *College by Post*, in answer to a request for help, which reached her in her own college days. This remarkable work began with "an informal correspondence with two or three other girls, whose schoolroom days were over." Its object is to help girls isolated from educational advantages, and Miss Petrie has succeeded in enrolling a staff of two hundred able teachers, educated at the several women's colleges, who give their work gratuitously. No fewer than three thousand students have entered the classes of the *College by Post*, and "since the most important history, the noblest literature, and the highest knowledge, should always come first, every one of our students undertakes to give half-an-hour a day to Bible study on some regular system." It was in the conduct of this great work, that it occurred to Miss Petrie that the most intelligent and profitable method of studying the Bible is to read it in the chronological order of the events it relates, and the books it contains, so far as that can be ascertained. This idea she embodied in a marvellously helpful series of pamphlets, which have been going about the world, since 1887, under the title of the *Chronological Scripture Cycle*. Readers of all conditions and ages, who got hold of these pamphlets, found in them the wise guidance to the actual study of the Bible, which so many have looked for in vain. It is these pamphlets which have now been published under the title of *Clues to Holy Writ*. We cannot imagine a more useful volume, or one better deserving a place on the bookshelves of every Christian family. Miss Petrie's training leads her to approach the study of the Scriptures as she would that of any other literature. She gives exactly the hints, helps, clues, classification, notes, which the cultivated mind craves, and must needs be sadly at sea in the study of the Bible without.

But it is culture rather than exegetical scholarship that Miss Petrie brings to the work, and—must we own it?—a middleman* is rather welcome who will present to us the severe labours of the scholar, transmitted, as it were, through the medium of a cultivated mind. The laborious research to which the *Clues* testify, give the volume unusual value. Culture and wide reading are not the only qualifications Miss Petrie has brought to this work. It is the tone of assured conviction, the easy, unanxious movement of one who knows his guide and enjoys his journey, that makes the Bible studies, presented by